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(U) History Today - 26 June 2014

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(U) Early in World War II, the German military had commandos tasked with capturing enemy intelligence documents. These units could operate ahead of the front lines, and might wear enemy uniforms to gain the access they sought

(U) These units operated during the German invasions of Poland, Yugoslavia, and Greece early in the war. British authorities learned from decrypts of messages that commandos in Athens had immediately raided British Army Headquarters in search of documents

(U) Several British officers pushed for creation of a similar unit. One of those advocating this was CDR Ian Fleming, pictured, a special assistant to Admiral John Godfrey, director of Royal Navy Intelligence.

(U) This resulted in the establishment of 30 Commando, also known as the Admiralty Intelligence Unit, also known as 30 Assault Unit, or, less formally, as "Fleming's Private Army." Operating first in North Africa, over the course of the war, this unit captured invaluable material the Germans had kept secret. A good deal of this was cryptologic material, including cipher machines and many documents on German cryptanalytic work against Allied ciphers

(U) This effort probably was a precursor to the TICOM (Target Intelligence Committee) teams of personnel from Bletchley Park who were sent into recently liberated areas near the end of the war. Their mission also was to acquire cryptologic materials as well as identify German cryptologic personnel

(U) Fleming in the course of the war came up with other proposals for covert operations, hoping to be part of the action. However, he knew too much and was never allowed to travel to locations where he might be captured. Yes, this is the Ian Fleming that wrote the James Bond novels after the war.

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